

Antalya As Destination In Convention Tourism

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Abstract

Convention tourism is a type of alternative tourism consisting of the total of activities which emerge as a result of the organization of meetings. Individuals convene in line with the developments in science and technology and the increasing need for specialization, in order to learn new technologies, to explain and present their scientific work, or to engage in an exchange of information. This situation introduces convention tourism, an important type of alternative tourism activity. Growing rapidly, this type of tourism came to tone into other types of tourism and now possesses an important share in world tourism. There are about 9 thousand conventions all over the world each year both at national and international levels, and as a result, 75 million people travel for these conventions.

Convention tourism, which partially solves the problem of seasonal tourism and has the potential to bring high revenues, is next to leisure tourism, an important alternative tourism activity highly preferred in Turkey. After Istanbul, Antalya now wants to have a say in the market of international conventions.

This study displays the nature of convention tourism in Turkey and in the world with numeric data. It indicates the characteristics of convention tourism as well as the expectations of attendees from the convention centers. The chosen convention city shall be above a certain level so as to fulfill these expectations. With this aim, Antalya, which wants to play a bigger role in the convention market, has been thoroughly examined through a SWOT analysis.

Keywords: Alternative tourism, Convention tourism, Antalya

1.INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector has started to increase its variety according to demands. One of the alternative tourism types, convention tourism has been rapidly growing in the past few years. According to the data in 2011 by the Union of International Associations (UIA), every year about 9 thousand conventions are organized in 218 countries and 75 million people travel to attend them. Convention tourism, whose participants spend 3.5 times more than normal tourists, has a direct effect on 37 sectors and an income share of 30% in the world tourism market. (http://ifm.ibb.gov.tr/Calismalar/Documents/altyap%C4%B1%20_komitesi_cal%C4%B1%C5%9Fma_raporu_taslak.pdf; reaching date: 5.4.2012)

During this process of development, Turkey has been lucky in this competition due to its first-class accommodation and meeting facilities, its transportation opportunities to the world's principal cities, its cultural and natural beauties, its perfect climate, and its more appropriate

prices compared to alternative destinations. Using this opportunity, Turkey has been increasing its share in the convention tourism sector, which has been growing rapidly. In this context, many initiatives were undertaken mainly in Istanbul and in other cities such as Izmir, Antalya, and Ankara, where convention and visitor centers have been established. In “Turkey’s Tourism Strategy for 2023” and “Action-Plan 2007-2023,” implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara, Bursa, Konya and Mersin are designated as convention cities, and Istanbul, Antalya, Izmir, Ankara, Adana, Gaziantep and Trabzon as important expo cities. (Ersun & Aslan, 2009: 107)

This study first explains the scope of convention tourism and its characteristics, and examines the development of the convention market in the world and in Turkey. Then it evaluates Antalya, an important touristic city in Turkey, according to the supply in convention tourism by using the SWOT analysis method.

2.CONVENTION TOURISM

According to the United National World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of 980 million people traveling on earth in 2011 will increase to 1.6 billion in 2020, and the 919 million dollars of revenue from tourism in 2010 will increase to 2 trillion dollars. (<http://www.tourexpi.com/tr-intl/news.html~nid=42076>: reaching date: 12.4.2012) In Turkey, which started its touristic activities in 1980, the number of 326 thousand tourists in 1980 increased to 31.5 million people in 2011, and the revenue reached 17 million dollars. According to UNWTO, after France, the USA, Spain, China, Italy, and England, Turkey is 7th in the list of first 10 countries which attracted the most visitors in 2011. (www.airporthaber.com/turkiye-dunya-yedincisi--32450h.html: reaching date: 5.4.2012)

The original concept of tourism has been changing every day in terms of form and content, and the demands and expectations of tourists have been also shifting. The trio of sea-sun-sand has been yielding its place to alternative tourism activities. Therefore, national, regional, and urban leaders, who realize the local, regional, national and international value of tourism, choose to diversify touristic activities with alternative tourism options and build their plans accordingly. One of the important types of tourism growing in the world in the past few years is convention tourism. The increasing number of conventions every year demonstrates the bright future of this type of tourism.(Kozak, Kozak & Kozak, 2001: 21)

Convention tourism is the total of events and relations regarding travel and accommodation that emerge out of individuals convening in a location that is not their usual lodging or working place, in order to have an information exchange on a topic that requires specialization, such as scientific developments or occupational subject matters. (www.kobifinans.com.tr/tr/sektor/011610/21645: reaching date: 5.4.2012)

Convention tourism does not consist of only the travels for conventions. Seminars, symposiums, workshops etc. are also included within the scope of convention tourism. For this reason, “meeting tourism” is used instead of “convention tourism.” The conventions organized nationally and internationally may be on many topics. (Pechlaner, Zeni & Raich, 2007: 32)

Convention tourism is part of business tourism and of the individual business trips or convention and fair visits, which belong to that category as well. For this reason, it comes into existence with the change and trends in cultural topics, leisure time, workforce, health, and education levels.

While on one hand benefiting from the infrastructure of tourism, on the other, it can balance the low seasons when traditional touristic activity is stagnant or low. Traditional tourists and convention delegates are not only service chain operations, but also bring wealth to the economy of the region.

2.1 The Characteristics of Convention Tourism

With its multi-faceted nature, convention tourism is differentiated from classical tourism in the following ways:(www.kobifinans.com.tr/tr/sektor/011610/22676: reaching date: 8.4.2012)

- Conventions are more concentrated in certain periods of the year and because they usually take place outside the conventional touristic season, they affect the occupancy rate in hotels positively.
- Convention tourism and convention hotel management need a strong infrastructure in terms of technical equipment and other constituents.
- Fixed investments such as the construction of meeting facilities and convention centers are of a high cost and are usually undertaken by the state or the local administration.
- Because convention tourism is organized outside the general tourism season and because it involves a wide range of touristic services, it is the type of tourism which generates the highest income.
- It requires detailed and professional preparations such as simultaneous translation, special programs, preparation and distribution of invitation cards, various transfers, hotel reservations, arrangement of meetings for delegates and the media, organization of the convention center, and preparation of tours for accompanying persons and spouses.
- The organization of an international convention is considered as an important promotion tool for a country.
- For success in convention tourism, not only the related agencies, but all society shall support the initiative, and there shall be collaboration among different sections of society.
- For success, this type of organizations require a certain level of quality and capacity regarding transportation, infrastructure, accommodation, convention center and facilities, personnel, security, peripheral services, environmental and cultural riches.
- The level of income of convention participants (delegates) is quite high and all their expenses are covered by the organization they are representing. According to TURSAB, they spend 3 times more than a conventional tourist.(www.siyasiforum.net/viewtopic.php?f=13&t=12232: reaching date: 5.4.2012)

2.2 Convention Tourism in the World and in Turkey

According to International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) data in 2010, Turkey, this hosts 160 international conventions, places 20th in world ranking. The United States, Germany, Spain, England, and France occupy the first five spots. When examined at a city level, in 2010, Istanbul placed 7th in world ranking with 109 conventions before Vienna, Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, Singapore and Madrid, and rose from 13th place to 6th in European rankings. (<http://iccwORLD.com/dcps/doc.cfm?docid=1246>: reaching date: 5.3.2012) 2 million convention participants who came to Turkey stayed for an average of three days and spent 4 million Euros.

Compared to 10 years ago, this 5-times increase escalated Turkey 14 steps and Istanbul 24 steps in the convention race. Now, 80% of the conventions in Turkey take place in Istanbul. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism took this concentration into consideration and added other cities as locations where conventions and meetings can be organized: Ankara, Antalya as well as Mersin, Izmir, Konya and Bursa.

Despite all this data and these efforts, and despite all the natural and cultural attractions and riches that Turkey has, it is not possible to say that the country benefits adequately from convention tourism. It is obvious that the efforts in this sector should be more deliberately carried out and more carefully organized.

Convention tourism cannot emerge by itself in this country. Factors of attraction are of utmost importance in convention tourism. Natural factors such as the geographical location of the region, natural beauties, climate, cultural and historic riches as well as infrastructure and superstructure shall be present. The locations where special investments will be made for convention tourism shall definitely possess convenient facilities for local and foreign visitors to meet their needs such as accommodation, eating-drinking, leisure etc. For a city to earn its title as an international convention city, facilities such as transportation, infrastructure, accommodation, convention centers, security, peripheral services, as well as natural and cultural riches shall be above a certain quality and capacity. Any malfunction that may arise in these constituents can also hinder the success of the conventions. (Aymankuy, 2006: 45)

According to the statement of Istanbul Convention and Visitors' Bureau, 1.5 million tourists, among the 9 million who visited Istanbul, came for the purpose of meetings and conventions. According to the data of Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB), the number of tourists who came to Antalya for meetings and conventions is around 200 thousand. All around Turkey, about 2 million convention participants lodged in 2010. This number is equal to the number of tourists who visited Turkey in 1980s. (www.siyasiforum.net/viewtopic.php?f=13&t=12232: reaching date: 5.4.2012)

3.CONVENTION TOURISM DESTINATION: ANTALYA

According to the 2010 data of Antalya Convention Bureau, a total 86 conventions were organized in Antalya, 40 international, 46 national. With an 81% increase, this number rose up to 156 in 2011. For international conventions, the increase is 40%, and 117% for national conventions. Accordingly, a total of 156 conventions, 56 national and 100 international, were organized in Antalya in 2011. In 2010, 37,045 people participated in these meetings.

In 2011 as well, it is observed that conventions were concentrated in Belek, and as in the previous year, most conventions were in the area of medicine. In addition, many conventions were organized in the following areas: agriculture, sports, pharmaceuticals, animal husbandry, statistics, chemistry, biology, psychology, physics, technology, cosmetics, law, aquaculture, geography, and archeology.

Based on the present statistics from Antalya Convention Bureau, it is possible to observe that the convention sector has been fast growing in Antalya, and that the developments shall take place at a higher speed in order to fulfill the needs of this sector.

3.1 SWOT Analysis of Antalya In Terms Of Convention Tourism

The establishments and foundations which decide to organize a convention determine the location of the convention according to the expectations and wishes of the prospective delegates. Would the potential delegates want to rest or to have fun? Would they prefer an urban center or the suburbs? Does the country or city in question have a positive image? All of these are taken into consideration in the choice of location for a convention. (Aymankuy, 1997: 56)

For a city to earn the title of a convention center, it is expected that some criteria regarding the following is above a certain quality: accessibility, price, quality of service, the compatibility of the facilities with the capacity of the convention, the experience of the convention center on convention tourism, the quality of the hotels near the convention center, transportation ease inside the city, touristic attractions (cultural richness, restaurants, museums etc.) and security. (<http://www.kobifinans.com.tr/tr/sektor/011610/22001>: reaching date: 10.4.2012)

In order to increase the demand for international and national conventions in our country, we need private congress centers outside Istanbul. One of the leading locations is Antalya. Here

the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), which includes the strong and weak aspects of the region as well as the opportunity and threats present in the market, is used to provide an evaluation of the potential of convention tourism in Antalya.

Strengths

- According to data from 2010, there are 789 certified accommodation facilities in Antalya with a capacity of 348 thousand beds. Many tourism facilities certified by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, primarily those in Belek, Kadriye and Kemer, possess modern meeting rooms, (There are a total of 67 hotels that provide services related to convention tourism: 47 in Kemer, 6 in Side, 6 in Manavgat, 8 in Alanya. These hotels operate with 155 conference rooms. Their total capacity is for 26,000 people.)
- Antalya has a coast to the Mediterranean that is 630 kilometers-long and it benefits from its coastal location for summer tourism (sea-sand-sun),
- Antalya is suitable for tourism all four seasons due to its climate, and is open to tourism for 12 months,
- Antalya has locations which have potential for cultural tourism,
- Antalya is one of the biggest ports in Turkey and hosts 7 yacht ports as well,
- It has the second biggest airport in Turkey, with two outgoing terminals. Due to its airport, passenger and yachts ports, tourism investments, 21,000 scheduled and charter flights every year to 42 different spots in Turkey and abroad, Antalya is the center of attraction for national and international fairs, (www.geziantalya.com/bilgi.asp?id=151&BilgiADI=Antalya %20 Kongre%20Turizmi: reaching date: 5.4.2012)
- There are efforts to regenerate historical sites,
- It is home to Sabancı Glass Pyramide Congress Fair Center with its 4,500 m2 floor space and 5 rooms, Antalya Cultural Center with its 9000 m2 closed space, Haşim İşcan Cultural Center with its 11,059 m2 space, and Antalya Expo Center which has 20.000 m2 closed fair

space, (http://www.antalya.gov.tr/yukleme/long_files/DBA_Cilt_2/antalya%20cilt2.html: reaching date: 16.4.2012)

- There is a total of 21 museum and historical sites; 18 are ancient cities, 3 museums,
- The airport is 13 kilometers away from the city center (important for the conventions),
- There are 25 tourism areas designated by the Ministerial Cabinet, such as Belek, Kemer, and Alanya,
- According to data in 2011, there are 324 beaches with blue flag, 17 marinas with blue flag and 12 yachts with blue flag, (<http://www.antalya.gov.tr/anasayfa>: reaching date: 16.4.2012)
- Prices are affordable,
- The historical and cultural spirit of the city is alive 24/7,
- Many international cultural and art festivals are organized here,
- Antalya benefits from a variety in tourism, including cultural tourism, health tourism, shopping tourism, sports tourism, and recreational tourism,
- The local administration is conscious of the importance of convention tourism,

Weaknesses

- Efforts among stakeholders in the sector of convention tourism are uncoordinated,
- The number of multi-purpose convention centers is inadequate,
- Convention demands in Antalya largely arise from the internal market, and the international demand is quite low,
- Accommodation facilities and travel agencies related to convention tourism are not members of international organizations that largely work on conventions, (Çizel, 1999: 128)
- Tourism promotion is the total of activities of creating a positive image about the touristic values of the country and of informing potential tourists about essential qualities which constitute the touristic potential of a country, such as nature, culture, history, archeology, the sea, the sun etc., and about the superstructure of tourism, by using all types of promotion techniques in tourism markets. (Tavmergen & Meriç, 2002: 33) However, Antalya lacks marketing and promotion in convention tourism,
- Convention and Visitors' Centers have an important role in coordinating convention tourism, manage the relationship among the stakeholders, and organize the activities of destination management and of marketing and promotion. (Ersun & Aslan, 2009: 92) Antalya Convention Bureau, which is important in the marketing of convention tourism in Antalya, is not successful in this area,
- Despite many convention hotels in Antalya, because these hotels prefer to act individually, there are few opportunities for organizing international conventions,
- Even though accommodation places have facilities suited for convention tourism, they lack the staff specialized in this topic, (Çizel, 1999: 126)
- Antalya lacks the perception of a certain image about convention tourism, (Doğanlı, 2006: 187)
- Because the type of tourism based on sea-sun-sand trio is emphasized here, many businesses have little interest in other types of tourism,

Opportunities

- Indian Travel Agencies Union and British Travel Agencies Union chose Antalya for their Travel Congress in 2012,
- International Union of Congress Organizers, with members specialized in meetings and congresses over 65 countries, preferred Antalya for their general assembly over Houston in the United States and Monterrey in Mexico,
- Akdeniz University and International Antalya University (which will start student admission in the academic year of 2012-2013 as the second university and the first endowment university in Antalya) is engaging in activities both by working academically and by creating the qualified personnel who can work in convention tourism,

Threats

- Nature is being destroyed, especially on the coastal strip where there is unplanned and irregular development,
- The image of Antalya which cheap tourists create due to the cheap prices carries repelling characteristics for convention groups that have a higher income level than normal tourists, (Çizel,1999:113)
- The number of Turkey's competitors in the convention tourism area increase every day,
- The accommodation duration of the tourists is only 3-4 days,

4. CONCLUSION

As one of the cities with the biggest tourism potential in Turkey, Antalya is home to various types of tourism activities. One of these is convention tourism. By using SWOT analysis, this study evaluated Antalya, which is a preferred location for national and international congress activities on various topics, and its opportunities such as transportation, infrastructure, accommodation, convention centers and facilities, security, and peripheral services. The study indicated that areas such as transportation facilities, cultural and historical richness, and accommodation conditions are above a certain level. Marketing and promotion activities have shortcomings, and both local administration and private firms have a big role in this respect. In addition, the convention rooms in the hotels are not adequate. The lack of equipped convention centers also appears as a problem.

Taking huge steps in convention tourism, Turkey accelerated its activities also in Antalya after Istanbul. International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) choice of Antalya for their general assembly in 2014 is an important opportunity for Antalya to become popular in the convention tourism market. The city should combine this opportunity with its other strengths, reinforce its weaknesses, and take strong steps in convention tourism.

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